

[00:00:01.090] - Nicky Hamilton

This is Nicky Hamilton. And I am here today with Ms. Linda Fay Hill Hale. And we are at the St. Marks Community Center in Sewanee, Tennessee, and today is Monday, April 27. And I am here to talk to Ms. Linda about her life growing up in Sewanee as part of the Sewanee Black History Initiative. And Ms. Linda Hale, I want to thank you for sharing your story with us today. And if you wouldn't mind, would you please state your full name when you were born?

[00:00:38.830] - Linda Fay Hill

And where Linda Hill Hale November 5, 1955 at Emory Hodgeson Hospital, Sewanee, Tennessee.

[00:00:51.010] - Nicky Hamilton

Thank you, Ms. Hale. And so I will just start from the beginning. So if you wouldn't mind, can you tell me a little bit about your family and where you grew up?

[00:01:01.570] - Linda Fay Hill

All right. My mother's name was Alice Fay Hill Malone, and we lived on Willie Six Road. We started out living with my grandmother, Klemmy Hill, and we end up on Alabama Avenue. Once my mom got married to my stepfather, I can't remember the year that she did. But living here in Sewanee has been a good experience. When I was coming up as a child, the black people here, we was like family and we looked after each other and we still come together as a family. Going to school, it was good. When school was integrated, I think I was going into second grade, but I was put back in the first grade because my teacher, Miss Peggy Ramsey, said that I didn't know enough to be advanced. So I started back over at Sewanee elementary. I can't remember the year. I want to say it was in '65, but I'm not for sure. And my experience of going to school at Sewanee elementary, it was good. There was a few people at the first when school was integrated- there was this one certain man, I remember his name so well because his wife was a teacher, was telling my mom that I couldn't go to Sewanee Elementary and they had a few choice words for each other. But then thereafter that there was no problem out of him. But as going to school at Sewanee Elementary, I had white friends and there was a few that picked on us and call us the N word, but no hard feelings or no fights or nothing like that broke out and some of them would come become best friends. And then as far as I got on up in the 4TH, 5th grade, some of the seminarians, I think their father was theologians. I used to go to their house, we'll play and whatever, and it was all good. Then I went to Seth Junior High School for years for three years. And it was good on to Franklin County High, where I graduated in '75. It was good. So to me my life here on the mountain was good because then we had like the boys- it was the boys club and I think it was started out just being for the boys. But they began to let the girls come. And there was a few people there, like Doug Cameron. He took us on hikes when they took us on, like, field trips. And there's this one guy named Jim Wilson. I think he would take us places. And then they would take us camping out at the- what was the name of that place?- At the cabin. And they would take us campin'. And then they would take us and do little stuff with us, like being a mentor to us for my brothers and my brothers, which was Jimbo and Chris. They hung on to that. And we turned out to be a pretty good little bunch of my family from Alistar's family. But the boys club was an impact where we had somebody to look up to. And we felt like they wanted to help us move along. But it's all good. That's the way I see myself here in Sewanee and then to have friends that would invite you to their house and come and play with them and eat with them. I enjoy that. And now, to this day, sometimes I often wonder what happened to so and so or where's so and so at nowadays. But it was good.

[00:05:39.490] - Nicky Hamilton

What would you say it was some of your favorite things to do when you were a kid here in Sewanee?

[00:05:44.890] - Linda Fay Hill

Well, when I was a kid, I was a tomboy. My brothers now would go down the street. We lived on Willie Six Road... well, you remember when we used to play football? Yes, I remember we playing football. And then another thing is I was in the Girl Scouts, and I loved going to the Girl Scouts. I started out in the Brownies and I went all the way up to the cadet. And I loved that because we worked on badges and learned stuff. That girls was what it is to be a Girl Scout. And I loved that. And that was about it. Yeah.

[00:06:35.550] - Nicky Hamilton

I'm just going to repeat what you said because we had to turn this off because of the music. But so early on, you were telling me that some of your favorite things to do, because you consider yourself a tomboy, was playing football with your friends with the boys?

[00:06:52.770] - Linda Fay Hill

Yes.

[00:06:53.610] - Nicky Hamilton

Okay, great.

[00:06:54.330] - Linda Fay Hill

Yes. That was something to do. And then we'd get out and me and some of my friends, the girlfriends, we would go walk and we'd walk Uptown to the Student Union. And I ain't going to say but try to attend frat parties.

[00:07:13.390] - Nicky Hamilton

Did you get in?

[00:07:14.590] - Linda Fay Hill

Yeah. We got in.

[00:07:18.710] - Nicky Hamilton

So did you all have events like we did today? The cookouts. Do you remember those from your childhood?

[00:07:25.430] - Linda Fay Hill

No, I don't remember those. And I don't really recall any like that as a community coming together. Not that I can recall.

[00:07:35.510] - Nicky Hamilton

When did those start to you from your earliest recollection? When were these?

[00:07:40.970] - Linda Fay Hill

About seven years ago. When Carl had started, we all come together. We would all bring a covered dish and just fellowship with each other. And it was on Memorial Day.

[00:07:58.430] - Nicky Hamilton

And what were you all doing when you were kids? How did you come together with all your friends and family?

[00:08:05.630] - Linda Fay Hill

We would gather up in the yards or somebody would have a Winnie Roast and we would go and do Winnie Roasts. But other than that, it's coming together as a community community. It didn't happen like that. It didn't happen like that.

[00:08:23.210] - Nicky Hamilton

What was some of your favorite foods growing up?

[00:08:26.690] - Linda Fay Hill

Same thing now, pinto beans and cornbread. Macaroni and cheese, turnip greens. Yeah. And then mostly it was chicken back then because chicken was the cheapest staple that my mom never could have got.

[00:08:40.490] - Nicky Hamilton

Who made the best turnip greens?

[00:08:43.430] - Linda Fay Hill

My aunt Loretta. My aunt Loretta was the cook, she was the main Cook. But my mom could Cook, too. But my mom had certain stuff that she could Cook good. And my Aunt Loretta has certain stuff that she could do well with.

[00:08:59.310] - Nicky Hamilton

What was your favorite dish from you mom?

[00:09:04.030] - Linda Fay Hill

It was hamburger, smothered in gravy.

[00:09:07.570] - Nicky Hamilton

Yeah, that sounds good. Well, it sounds like you grew up mostly in late 60s, 70s, right. And so those were changing times in the US. And I'm wondering if you were aware of those changes happening and who you were talking to to help you make sense of those changes.

[00:09:37.190] - Linda Fay Hill

I really don't know an answer to that. And I learnt early on right from wrong. So I know what to and what not to and then listening to my mom. And then, like I said, looking up to some of the mentors from Girl Scouts and from the Boys Club. Other than that, yes.

[00:10:05.270] - Nicky Hamilton

Has any of the experiences here that you had at Sewanee growing up? How would you say those have shaped your perspective on life? Like how you think about life now based on how you grew up?

[00:10:17.990] - Linda Fay Hill

Great. Because back in the day, my mom had three kids before my sister was born, and she worked for the Majors. Shirley and John- Elizabeth Major, Shirley and Elizabeth Major. And she only made a certain amount. But she provided for us with what she made, which was very little, because now I look back I think how in the world did my mom give us this. Give us that. She gave us what we needed, not what we wanted, not like nowadays where parents give them kids what they want instead of what they need. But I learned early on from my mom of the way she worked and what little she had, she made stretch and to provide for her family. And I guess I learned a lot from that, which is probably the best thing I learned of looking at it that way of the little money that she made she made stretch. We never went without food. We never went without clothing or shoes. And I don't know, it's just great. I think I learned a lot from her of what I'm going to do for my children or what I did for my children and how I raised them.

[00:12:00.830] - Nicky Hamilton

Where are you children now? how many do you have?

[00:12:00.880] - Linda Fay Hill

I have three girls. Well, two girls of mine, and I'm raising her granddaughter. Well, I raised a granddaughter of my son who was killed in an accident at an early age, and I raised her as a daughter. That's why I always looked at as a daughter, not a granddaughter.

[00:12:22.350] - Nicky Hamilton

How old are your daughters? And what's their names?

[00:12:25.890] - Linda Fay Hill

One is 33, sierra is 33. Tashika is 23, and Anika I can't even think of how old she is.

[00:12:41.830] - Nicky Hamilton

and that's the granddaughter that you raised as a daughter?

[00:12:44.710] - Linda Fay Hill

No. The 23 year old was the granddaughter.

[00:12:48.310] - Nicky Hamilton
Okay.

[00:12:59.330] - Linda Fay Hill
Anika will be 39.

[00:12:59.380] - Nicky Hamilton
And where are they now?

[00:13:01.850] - Linda Fay Hill
Sierra lives over in Marion County and Tashika lives in Marion County and Anika lives in Hamilton County. We have six grandchildren. Yes.

[00:13:14.570] - Nicky Hamilton
And your daughters were raised here in Sewanee?

[00:13:17.150] - Linda Fay Hill
No, they weren't raised here in Sewanee. Well Anika was born here in Sewanee, and we moved from Sewanee when Anika was about four month old. It was in the 80s when I left early 80s when I left Sewanee. And I've been living in Marion County for the past 33, 34 years.

[00:13:43.470] - Nicky Hamilton
Why did you move there?

[00:13:47.170] - Linda Fay Hill
Well I met my husband. We've been married 33 years. Together about 35, 36 years. But 33 together in marriage.

[00:13:55.930] - Nicky Hamilton
and he was from Marion County.

[00:13:57.610] - Linda Fay Hill
Yes, he was from Marion County.

[00:13:59.290] - Nicky Hamilton
And where did you all meet?

[00:14:05.690] - Linda Fay Hill
Oh at a little club [unintelligible]

[00:14:08.510] - Nicky Hamilton
And so where do you live now? Like, what's your part?

[00:14:11.570] - Linda Fay Hill
I live in Jasper with me and my husband and the kids occasionally come and visit.

[00:14:19.490] - Nicky Hamilton
And so do you just come up to Sewanee for- how often do you come up to Sewanee?

[00:14:25.070] - Linda Fay Hill
I say maybe twice a month, if that. I may come and see, Carol or come and speak with Carl, or Sennadee, and that's it because most of my people that lived over in Cowan, well my last aunt passed on last year, and I just don't come this way that often. Like I used to. I still have cousins off in Cowan, but I don't come that often.

[00:14:55.250] - Nicky Hamilton

Do you come to these events?

[00:14:57.590] - Linda Fay Hill

Usually when they got events going on and I know about them. Yes, I do. I try to come and participate and just fellowship because like I said, they're like family. Yes, ma'am.

[00:15:09.650] - Nicky Hamilton

So one last question. Are there one or two things that you would want people to know about your childhood? If you want people to remember two things about your childhood, what would that be?

[00:15:31.950] - Linda Fay Hill

I don't know. There's no particular thing.

[00:15:35.130] - Nicky Hamilton

What about growing up in Sewanee? Are there one or two things you would want people to know about your experience growing up in Sewanee.

[00:15:44.070] - Linda Fay Hill

Mostly, most of the people that we met or dealt with treated us like somebody, they didn't see no color, or I felt like they didn't see no color. That's how I've seen it when I was coming up. Okay.

[00:16:05.110] - Nicky Hamilton

Are there any last thoughts? Closing thoughts you would like to say?

[00:16:10.510] - Linda Fay Hill

Yeah. I always thought once I retire working Sewanee would be back. I always call Sewanee home anyway, even though I don't live here, I always call Sewanee home. And I always thought once I retired, I would move back to Sewanee. But I guess living over in Jasper I can come back to visit, that'll suit me.

[00:16:32.990] - Nicky Hamilton

Your kids come here often? Do your kids come back to Sewanee?

[00:16:36.950] - Linda Fay Hill

No, they don't. They don't come that often. One of my daughters is with me today because I asked her to come and help us. She come back and the other one, she don't come that often. We don't come often like that. But I tell them about growing up and how we grew up and stuff. And like I said, there was people that impact my life or impact our lives to make us feel like somebody that I always call Sewanee home, no matter

[00:17:14.750] - Nicky Hamilton

What is the event like today, you know, the cookouts bringing everybody together. What does that mean to you?

[00:17:21.170] - Linda Fay Hill

I mean, it's a good thing. It's a good thing because white and black still mixing together and fellowship. And then some of the people that you may have seen today, you might not have seen them in years.

[00:17:36.470] - Nicky Hamilton

It's a nice way for people to come back together.

[00:17:39.050] - Linda Fay Hill

Come back together. Yes. And working up to this, I was telling people, well, we're going to the mountain Memorial Day, and they could recall me or my sister mentioning what we do up here on Memorial Day, coming together as a group of people. Yes, ma'am.

[00:18:02.810] - Nicky Hamilton

So the stories and experiences are being passed down.

[00:18:06.110] - Linda Fay Hill

Yes, ma'am. Yes ma'am.

[00:18:08.870] - Nicky Hamilton

Alright, well, Ms. Linda Hill, thank you so much for your time today, and it's been an honor and privilege to hear your story. So thank you for sharing with us. And we'll look forward to seeing you back here soon.

[00:18:24.950] - Linda Fay Hill

Thank you. You're so welcome. All right, then.